



Croydon
College



COULSDON
SIXTH FORM COLLEGE



Croydon
University
Centre

MEETING OF THE CROYDON COLLEGE AUDIT COMMITTEE
Thursday 11 March 2021 at 6.00pm
Virtual Meeting

PART ONE MINUTES

Present: Andrew Gilchrist (Chair)
Tom Hesmondhalgh (TH)
Claudine Reid

In attendance: Mike Cheetham (MC), RSM
Ann-Christine Harland, Vice-Principal Finance and Resources

Clerk: Clare Mitchell, Director of Governance

1.	Apologies for Absence Apologies for absence were received from Rahel Haque.
2.	Declarations of Interest The Chair declared that he is a Governor at Brooklands College.
3.	Minutes of the Meeting held on 25 November 2020 The Part One minutes of the previous meeting were approved as a correct record of the meeting.
4.	Matters Arising not on the Agenda The Committee noted the updated action list. The VPF&R reported that the additional piece of work being undertaken by RSM on historical subcontracting relationships had not yet been completed as some additional contract documentation remained outstanding. Action: VPF&R to ask the VPTSHE to send the additional contract documentation to RSM as soon as possible In terms of the College's historical subcontracting relationship with St Christopher's the next step would be for the VPF&R to contact the ESFA territorial team. The College might be asked to repay the funding received for these students. The numbers involved were small and if the money was repaid the data relating to these students could be removed from the ILR and this would have a positive impact on achievement rates. Action: VPF&R to discuss next steps re declaring the historical subcontracting relationship with St Christopher's with the ESFA

5.	<p>Update on the Impact of Covid 19</p> <p>Please refer to the discussion on the Risk Report at minute 9.</p>
6.	<p>Internal Audit Reports</p> <p>i) Internal Audit Progress Report</p> <p>The Committee noted the internal audit progress report. Four internal audits had taken place to date in 2020/21. The review of staff utilisation would now take place in April 2021. The report included a client briefing from RSM on enhancing the control framework in education.</p> <p>ii) Safeguarding</p> <p>The Committee noted the reasonable assurance opinion. There were three recommendations; one medium priority and two low priority. The VPF&R reported that the internal audit had taken place following the restructure of Student Services, which had resulted in changes to the safeguarding arrangements at both campuses.</p> <p>iii) Risk Management</p> <p>The Committee noted that this was an advisory report so no assurance rating had been given. The report included ten recommendations for completion by 31 July 2021. MC informed the Committee that the draft of the new Audit Code of Practice specifically referenced Board Assurance Frameworks and the increased emphasis on assurance was reflected in the recommendations in this report. The report also provided some benchmarking information from other Colleges. There were some areas, e.g. compliance and IT, where the College appeared to have fewer risks than other Colleges. The VPF&R expressed the view that this was because the College's risk register was focused on the risks to achieving the College's strategic objectives. IT risks such as cyber security were included within the risks to achieving Strategic Objective 5.</p> <p>The VPF&R reported that the current Risk Register had been in operation for approximately twelve months. There were some inconsistencies in the way in which the document was used and updated by members of the Executive Team and the level of challenge at Committees and the Board. The Executive Team were discussing how best to align the Operational and Quality Improvement Plan (OQIP), which set out progress against the Strategic Objectives, and the Risk Register and how progress on both should be reported to the Board and its Committees.</p> <p>One of the recommendations was that Committees undertook a deep dive into a sample of risks on a periodic basis, with risk owners being required to present the risk to the relevant Committee to provide assurance that risks were being mitigated appropriately. The Chair indicated that he had seen this done at other Colleges at Board level.</p> <p>TH noted that the report indicated that there was little evidence of engagement with the risk register at individual Committees. Discussion at Committees was hampered by the size of the current risk register. The risk register was also hard to align with the business of the Committee and often considered at the end of Committee agendas.</p>

	<p>iv) Corporate Governance</p> <p>The 2020/21 Governance internal audit had focused on the quality of Board reporting. The Committee noted that this was an advisory report so no assurance rating had been given. There were three recommendations in the report. The outcome of the benchmarking exercise against other public sector organisations was positive.</p> <p>TH proposed that post meeting reflection should be introduced at the end of meetings to identify any areas of good practice or areas for improvement. This exercise was already undertaken at a number of the organisations that had been used for benchmarking. The DoG indicated that this would be helpful and would provide evidence for the committee and Board annual self-assessments.</p> <p>Action: DoG to speak to Chairs re the introduction of post meeting reflection at the end of meetings agendas</p> <p>v) Estates - Maintenance</p> <p>The Committee noted the reasonable assurance opinion. There were four medium priority recommendations. The internal audit work had been undertaken 19 months after merger and highlighted inconsistencies in practice between the two campuses. The VPF&R provided assurance that, although there were different systems in place for logging requests for ongoing maintenance, the cost of reactive maintenance actions was carefully monitored. A new system for logging reactive maintenance requests would be rolled out for both campuses as part of the new intranet, which was expected to go live at the end of March 2021. The existing processes would remain in place until the new intranet system went live.</p> <p>vi) Review of Historical Arrangements with Contractors</p> <p>Please refer to minute 4 above.</p> <p>vii) FE Benchmarking Report 2019/20</p> <p>The Committee noted the benchmarking report produced by RSM. MC indicated that the College came out well in terms of its assurance ratings for individual internal audits and numbers of recommendations. 82% of FE Colleges received the same level of assurance as Croydon College in terms of its annual internal audit opinion.</p>
7.	<p>External Audit of Merger Grants</p> <p>The Committee noted that the required external audits of the two grants that Croydon College had received on merger with Coulsdon College had now been undertaken by Buzzacott, who had agreed the wording required by the ESFA for the certification. The feedback from Buzzacott was that the audits were clean. However, the certificates had not yet been signed as there were ongoing discussions relating to the external audit of the restructuring grant about the request to provide separate figures for Coulsdon College following the merger given the move to shared services across both sites. The combined Colleges' income had exceeded budget at the end of 2019/20 and provision had already been made to return a proportion of this grant as required by the terms agreed with the ESFA.</p> <p>The Chair of the Audit Committee had agreed the engagement letters for the certification of the HMRC VAT settlement grant and the certification of the</p>

	restructuring facility grant expenditure so that the audit work could begin. The Committee confirmed this decision.
8.	<p>Standing Items</p> <p>i) 2019/20 Internal Audit Follow Up Tracker</p> <p>The VPF&R reported that RSM would be undertaking their follow up on 2019/20 internal audit recommendations in April 2021. The Committee noted that the College is reporting that 21 of the 32 recommendations had been completed. A further recommendation was still in progress but not yet due.</p> <p>However, the delay to the apprenticeship internal audit report, which was partly due to the difficulty of gathering evidence during the first lockdown, meant that 10 recommendations were still in progress and the original deadline had been missed.</p> <p>Progress on these ten recommendations had also been delayed by restructures in the apprenticeship team. The Director of MIS had now been seconded to the apprenticeship team on a short term basis to assist with this work and other data issues relating to the enrolment of current apprentices. Good progress was now being made. The Committee approved the extension of the deadline for completion of these recommendations to 31 March 2021.</p> <p>The Committee welcomed the focus on apprenticeships and asked how data quality would be maintained going forward. The VPF&R reported that the 2020/21 internal audit of apprenticeships would assist with identifying any areas for continued focus relating to the current data. Apprenticeships were a complex area of provision, particularly non-levy funded apprentices. However, the College's revised strategy was to increase its work with large local employers, where apprentices would be levy funded. The pandemic was having an impact on apprenticeship numbers, which were expected to be below budget for 2020/21.</p> <p>ii) Report on any fraud/corruption issues</p> <p>The VPF&R stated that there were no issues to report.</p> <p>iii) Reports on any additional work required by Auditors</p> <p>The VPF&R reported that VAT advice might be required on the purchase of equipment for the Clinical Simulation Centre. RSM or Buzzacott may be asked to quote for this work.</p>
9.	<p>2020/21 Risk Report – Spring 2021</p> <p>The VPF&R outlined the key changes to risk as set out in the paper. Covid risks were now integrated into the main risk register. Despite some impact e.g. Covid risk assessed enrolments delaying new starts and the implementation of the new mass testing centre at financial risk to the College, timetabled teaching and staff engagement on student welfare matters had continued throughout. The Committee noted that the costs of setting up the mass testing centre were expected to be reimbursed by the DfE but the mechanism for this was not yet clear. Students returning on site from 8 March were being offered lateral flow tests (LFTs). No positive cases had been identified to date as a result of these LFTs. Increasing numbers of older and vulnerable staff had now received at least one dose of the vaccine and case numbers in the borough were low. PPE was in place, along with</p>

	<p>one way routes on both campuses and there had been very few cases of Covid among staff and students in the Autumn term. One student at the Croydon Campus had died recently from Covid, but this was only death to date.</p> <p>The Committee noted that the contract with the University of Roehampton for the delivery of the nursing degree was close to finalisation. LSBU would also be delivering a nursing degree in Croydon from September 2021. However, nursing had been named as a priority area for higher education by the OfS and student numbers were strong. Cyber controls certification was underway and cyber security insurance had been purchased. This area of risk was being taken very seriously as the education sector was a target for phishing activity. More IT systems staff would be recruited in 2020/21 to support this area of work.</p>
10.	<p>Review of Policies</p> <p>There were no policies on the agenda for this meeting.</p>
11.	<p>Private Discussion – Auditors and the Audit Committee</p> <p>MC indicated that there was nothing that he wished to discuss in private with the Committee. Committee members indicated that they had nothing they wished to raise privately with the internal auditor.</p>
12.	<p>Dates of Future Meetings</p> <p>Thursday 10 June 2021</p>
13.	<p>Other Business</p> <p>The Chair reported that interviews for a new Governor with experience in audit and risk were taking place the following week.</p>

Signed Chair

Date: